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CIA Comments on the CINCPAC/MACV Dissent to the CIA  
Order of Battle Analysis, South Vietnam

General Comment

The CINCPAC/MACV dissent to the CIA assessment of enemy strengths is a detailed restatement of the views expressed by them at the DCI's conference. The dissent contains nothing new. Virtually all of the arguments advanced in the dissent were discussed at length during the conference or in the several papers tabled at the conference by CIA. The points that had relevance were taken into consideration in the final adjustments of our estimates.

The dissent has one basic and overriding defect -- it resolutely insists on equating an overall assessment of organized military, irregular and political manpower groups with the combat threat implicit in MACV's Military OB. The dissent consistently overlooks the stated CIA position that we were quantifying the overall military (regular and irregular) and political base that is the target of this unconventional war in both its military and its political aspects. The dissent also ignores the clear differentiation made by CIA between the agreed concept of regular military forces and the added concept of irregular elements and our clear characterization of the relatively inferior quality and lesser combat threat represented by the latter.

A second major fault of the MACV dissent is its insistence that estimative techniques should not or cannot be used either to estimate irregular forces or to correct the built-in deficiencies of a rigidly constructed Military OB. MACV and CINCPAC generally stood alone when they tried to make this case during the conference. All conferees agreed that when we know irregular organizations exist, when we agree on their functions, and when we report in detail on their activities, then we should be able to quantify them. Indeed, the consensus during the conference discussions was that it would be far more misleading not to quantify them and that the intelligence community has an obligation to do so.

In addition to these general comments some comments on specific points are made in the attachment.

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ATTACHMENT

Comments on Specific Points  
in CINCPAC/MACV Dissent

MACV

1. Enemy behavior during and after the TET offensive when the enemy drew down on civilian support elements to reinforce combat units. Belies CIA claims on the magnitude of enemy strength.

2. An enemy document captured in May 1967 states that the total enemy strength in South Vietnam (probably in mid-1966) was 285,000.

3. The fact that the enemy drew down as he did for Tet and did not use the Self Defense force in attacks on the cities proves that this element should not be considered as part of the significant threat.

Combat Forces (Maneuver and Combat Support)

4. CIA's addition of the small specialized combat units was unwarranted because most of these units appeared in the OB in different guises already.

CIA

1. Since 31 July 1965 when the first large-scale enemy orders for a "reduction in administrative personnel, both civilian and military" were issued, it has been common practice for the enemy to draw down on civilian and support elements.

2. This is one of the few instances that MACV has been enamored of a captured document. We note that the document can be interpreted to mean that the VC were addressing themselves to MACV's own estimates. More to the point, there is a long history of high-level captured documents, not cited by MACV, that would point to much higher numbers.

3. We have described the Self Defense as supporting the Guerrillas operating in rural areas. We do not believe these personnel are of suitable quality for attacks on regular Allied military units. Nonetheless, under present conditions in the countryside, they are useful, contribute to the success of the enemy in controlling his rural areas, and inflict casualties on Allied forces.

4. MACV's points on this issue were discussed during the conference, and found wanting in virtually every detail. We are, however, prepared to reduce these add-ons when and as MACV presents hard evidence that they are in the OB.

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5. CIA's addition of "unlisted service and support personnel probably integral to divisions" was unwarranted because Communist divisions do not have a standard TO/E and that some divisional support units are company-sized.

Administrative Service Forces

6. CIA's analysis of the number of Administrative Service troops, primarily based on ratios, was invalid because CIA's documentary sample was small, outdated, and pertinent almost exclusively to III and IV Corps.

Guerrillas

7. CIA's methods of computing guerrilla strengths were invalid because they were principally based on population statistics and extrapolations from documents; MACV's method, based on a reporting system (RITZ reports) in which each district sends in its own estimate of local guerrilla strength, is more likely to produce an accurate estimate.

Political Cadres

8. CIA is wrong in considering "typists, guards, and other low-level personnel" at district level and above as part of the infrastructure, because they are "not in significant leadership positions."

5. We agree with both statements, but can repeat that our contention that support units are unlisted in MACV's OB has been amply borne out by recent evidence.

6. We have discussed all these arguments in detail in the conference and in our papers, and would point out that reasonable estimates have been produced for this element of the enemy's forces which had simply never been estimated previously.

7. We have dealt with the inadequacies of the RITZ system at length. We note that when a document is captured in which guerrilla strengths in a given area are listed, the documented strengths are usually much higher than those put forth in the local RITZ report. We would also observe the "trained intelligence officers" who forward the district RITZ reports, have served an average of about five months in the district. Only a very small portion of their time during the five months is taken up deriving guerrilla estimates.

8. These personnel are essential to the operation of the Viet Cong political organization. Nowhere in the definition of "infrastructure (as devised in Honolulu in February 1967) does it state they should be omitted. When such personnel are

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9. CIA is mistaken in considering the Self Defense, Secret Self Defense, and Assault Youth as part of the organized threat in South Vietnam. If such forces are counted, so should a myriad of other VC organizations, including the "Foster Sisters' Association."

Attrition

10. CIA states that the insurgency base must be quantified so that it can be attrited but we note that their study does not attrit these forces.

"eliminated" or when they defect, they are universally listed as having been part of the "infrastructure." We acknowledge that the criteria used to determine who belongs in the "infrastructure" are open to interpretation, and have recommended that a redefinition of the term be undertaken with all deliberate speed.

9. We reiterate that the Self Defense and Secret Self Defense Forces are subordinate to the Military Affairs sections at village and hamlet levels and are considered by the VC as part of their military organization. (MACV similarly considered them as such between April 1962 and September 1967.) The Assault Youths are uniformed, often armed, serve full time at district level and above, and frequently appear on battlefields and in body counts.

10. This is a misrepresentation of the CIA position but we also note that MACV misrepresents his own attrition methodology, including the use of new data apparently produced for the purpose.

A table is presented which purports to show, in detail, the MACV view of attrition (gains and losses) for the quarter. These data are not consistent with those used in MACV's monthly computations. For example, 38,000 is given for infiltration. The numbers used in the monthly report add to 31,000. Further, a new category of "Possible Other Undetected Gains" is added with a range of 0-15,000. This has never appeared previously.

In general, MACV continues to insist that the whole category of estimated personnel losses be ascribed

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to the enemy's military OB. CIA has never contended that this loss estimate is too high, but that in the overall process of OB maintenance, the losses are not properly balanced by gains and as a result, the OB shows a downward trend which does not reflect the actual trend.

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